

Oystercatcher Inland Breeding

Title

Oystercatcher Inland Breeding 1958-1959

Description and Summary of Results

The Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* is predominantly a coastal bird, and most of their life is spent in flocks. By far the greatest numbers also nest along on the coast, but one race nests by inland waters in eastern Europe and central Asia, and another along the courses of the snow-rivers of South Island, New Zealand. Apart from these, the species was known to nest inland only in Holland, north Germany, Denmark, and southern Sweden, as well as Great Britain.

An enquiry was run in 1958 and 1959 to determine the extent of this inland nesting in Britain and to try to document the history of the behaviour.

In the eastern highlands of Scotland Oystercatchers had nested inland since at least the 18th Century, and it was not possible to say from the survey whether there had been any recent general increase in the numbers breeding inland there.

It was found that the invasion of southern Scotland and northern England had proceeded at first up the rivers flowing into the Solway starting in the late 19th Century, and had then spread over the course of the next 50 years or so. They were on the Ribble by the early 1930s and spread through the Yorkshire Dales in the 1940s, with the latter and in many other river valleys flowing into the North Sea being colonised from the west over the hills rather than coming up rivers from the east coast. They first bred in Northumberland in 1951, in Co. Durham in 1954 and they were in Derbyshire and Cheshire by 1956. Southern Scotland, also seemingly colonised from the west, was colonised during the late 1940s. The spread was continuing in 1958 and 1959 (and has done so to a great extent since).

There were occasional reports of breeding away from the immediate vicinity of the coast in several other areas although never more than about 10-15km inland. A full history is detailed in the report of the survey.

Methods of Data Capture

Printed questionnaires were sent out in 1958 and 1959 to those who expressed readiness to assist in the inquiry, and a thorough examination was made of the literature on the subject. In 1960 the organiser visited many of the known or probable breeding areas in the north of England.

Purpose of Data Capture

To find out the history and extent of breeding by Oystercatchers inland in northern England and southern Scotland where it had apparently increased considerably in living memory. (In the Scottish Highlands it had bred inland for well over 100 years.)

Geographic Coverage

Primarily northern England and southern Scotland as this was the area which was being colonised extensively at the time of the enquiry.

Temporal Coverage

The breeding seasons of 1958 and 1959 although historical accounts for areas were requested as well.

Other Interested parties

The enquiry was supported by the BTO as a Trust-aided enquiry.

Organiser(s)

E J M (John) Buxton as a volunteer.

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The main report of the survey is:

Buxton, E.J.M. 1961. The inland breeding of the Oystercatcher in Great Britain, 1958-59. *Bird Study* 8: 194-209.

The survey was noticed in all issues of *Bird Study* for 1958 and 1959 and that for March 1960.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

1 Folder containing a few letters only.

Notes on Access and Use**Other information****Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**